

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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MARKEY AND NADLER LEAD HOUSE DEMOCRATS DEMANDING ANSWERS FROM THE PRESIDENT ON WHY BUSH ADMINISTRATION ALLOWED NUCLEAR MATERIALS AND EXPLOSIVES TO DISAPPEAR IN IRAQ

Washington, DC: Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the Homeland Security Committee, and Rep. Jerrold Nadler, a senior member of the Judiciary Committee, wrote a letter to the President demanding answers on how and why nuclear and explosive materials went missing on our watch. 50 House Democrats have signed onto the letter.

“This is yet another blunder by the Administration in carrying out the war in Iraq,” said Rep. Markey adding, “One of the Administration’s primary reasons for taking America to war was that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. Why didn’t they immediately seize and secure these sites, if they really feared they contained weapons?”

Rep. Markey noted that “The President did not respond to news reports about the missing Iraqi high explosives until two days after these reports first appeared, and then he said we did not have the facts – well, why don’t we have the facts?”

The lawmakers’ letter that Reps. Markey and Nadler released today asks:

“We are writing to you about the troubling news that nuclear and explosive materials have gone missing on our watch in Iraq. While Saddam Hussein did not have nuclear weapons or the capabilities to make nuclear weapons, the missing materials could be reengineered or used in dirty bombs. The lost explosives can be used against our own troops in Iraq. Our questions include:

- When did the Administration learn of the missing explosives and nuclear materials? Since that date, what communications, formal or informal, has there been between the IAEA and the Departments of State and Defense?
- Why did we fail to secure both the explosives site at Al Qaqaa and the nuclear sites in Iraq, given the specific information supplied by the IAEA? Why did the Administration not listen to IAEA’s warnings, specifically on the potential danger of the missing explosives?
- Why does the IAEA not have full access to the nuclear sites in Iraq?
- What is the U.S. position on securing Iraq’s explosives and nuclear materials? What specific steps has your Administration taken to recover any of these sensitive materials?”

Initially reported in May of 2003, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has now officially confirmed in its latest update that a substantial amount of materials, even entire buildings that once housed Iraq's nuclear infrastructure, are gone. Several Democratic House members sent a letter to President Bush on June 16, 2003, expressing their concerns about reports of unsecured nuclear sites in Iraq. More than a year later, they have yet to receive any response.

The IAEA recently reported that it has not been able to get into Iraq to properly monitor the nuclear sites since March 17, 2003. It was during this time that equipment and explosive materials have gone missing. Later the IAEA was only granted access to the Tuwaitha area. Some military goods have turned up in scrap yards in the Middle East and Europe. None of the high precision equipment has turned up.

Now published reports have indicated that the 377 tons of the explosives HMX, RDX and PETN from the site Al Qaqaa are gone. This has raised concerns that the explosives could be in the hands of terrorists. IAEA officials have indicated that they warned the U.S. both before and after the invasion specifically about securing these explosives. One U.S. Defense official at the Pentagon has also stated that Al Qaqaa was "well known as a storage depot for conventional explosives." The explosives still remain at large.

Rep. Markey concluded, "We now know that this Administration's intelligence reports about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction were flawed, and that they failed to secure known nuclear and explosive sites. The Vice President has recently suggested that questioning the whereabouts of these materials amounts to making "wild" and "unsubstantiated" accusations, but the fact is that the IAEA has provided the information that forms the basis for the concerns we are raising in our letter. The IAEA has been consistent in its finding that Iraq did not have a nuclear weapons program, but that Iraqi nuclear materials and related high explosives needed to be properly monitored; something the Administration has failed to do. This Administration must be held accountable for their leadership failures," concluded Rep. Markey.

Signers of the Markey-Nadler letter include:

Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), Raúl M. Grijalva (D-AZ), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Gary L. Ackerman (D-NY), Lloyd Doggett (D-TX), Janice D. Schakowsky (D-IL), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), José E. Serrano (D-NY), Rush D. Holt (D-NJ), Tom Udall (D-NM), James P. McGovern (D-MA), Frank Pallone Jr. (D-NJ), Grace F. Napolitano (D-CA), Karen McCarthy (D-MO), Jim McDermott (D-WA), Joseph M. Hoeffel (D-PA), James L. Oberstar (D-MN), Martin T. Meehan (D-MA), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Rosa L. DeLauro (D-CT), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), Sander M. Levin (D-MI), Wm. Lacy Clay (D-MO), Peter A. DeFazio (D-OR), Lois Capps (D-CA), William D. Delahunt (D-MA), Maxine Waters (D-CA), Peter Deutsch (D-FL), Henry A. Waxman (D-CA), Susan A. Davis (D-CA), Donald M. Payne (D-NJ), Charles B. Rangel (D-NY), Robert Wexler (D-FL), Sam Farr (D-CA), Hilda L. Solis (D-CA), Brad Sherman (D-CA), Lynn C. Woolsey (D-CA), Bill Pascrell Jr. (D-NJ), Ted Strickland (D-OH), Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL), Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), Mark Udall (D-CO), Michael M. Honda (D-CA), Linda T. Sánchez (D-CA), Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), Adam B. Schiff (D-CA), Anna G. Eshoo (D-CA)

Copies of the letter and related correspondence can be found at www.house.gov/markey